



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Three More Birds Test Positive for West Nile virus ***San Diego County residents encouraged to report dead birds***

County Vector Control officials announced today that three more dead birds have tested positive for West Nile virus, bringing San Diego County's West Nile virus count to 28 dead birds and two horses. A Western Scrub Jay and an American Crow were collected on Sep. 22 in the Alpine area, the other bird was also an American Crow picked up in Ramona on Sept. 27.

"Recently we have seen a decrease in the number of dead bird calls. We urge the public to continue reporting dead birds. They are the best indicator that West Nile virus is active in a specific area. It helps our staff to target and treat mosquito breeding sites to better protect the health of the public," said Gary Erbeck, Director of the San Diego County Department of Environmental Health.

Vector Control continues to pick up and test crows, ravens, jays, hawks, owls, and falcons to monitor the spread of the virus. The public is asked to report dead birds if they meet the following criteria: they have been dead for less than 24 hours; do not have a foul odor; are not covered with ants or flies; are not stiff; and if their bodies are intact and have not been hit by a car, shot, or killed by animals. Placing a bag of ice over the bird will help to preserve it until Vector Control staff can collect the specimen for testing. All other dead birds should be placed in a plastic bag and discarded in a covered trash can. While you cannot get West Nile virus from dead birds, wear disposable gloves if you must handle birds.

Mosquitoes can breed in very little water. Residents need to check their property weekly for standing water. Remove, empty or turn over items such as old tires, pots, buckets, saucers and play equipment that can catch and hold water. Larger water sources such as horse troughs, decorative fountains, ponds and inoperable swimming pools can be stocked with fish that eat mosquito larvae before they hatch into biting adults that can carry disease. These fish are available free of charge at 12 locations around the county. Check the website for locations.

You can protect yourself from the virus by: staying inside at dawn and dusk; wearing long sleeves and pants when outdoors; and by using an insect repellent containing DEET when you must be outdoors. Keep screens on doors and windows and make sure they are in good repair. For more information on West Nile virus, or to report mosquito breeding sites or dead birds please call the County of San Diego Vector Control at (888) 551-INFO (4636). You can also visit the official County West Nile virus website at www.SDFightTheBite.com.

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